United Nations A/57/214

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 July 2002
English
Original: Arabic/English/Spanish

Fifty-seventh session
Item 64 of the preliminary list*
Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General**

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Observations	3–4	2
III.	Replies received from Governments		2
	Egypt		2
	Guatemala		4
	Fiji		4
	Israel		4
	Lebanon		5
	Qatar		5
	Tunisia		6

* A/57/50/Rev.1.
** The present report includes replies received from Member States up to June 2002.

02-48324 (E) 200802 230802

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 56/21 of 29 November 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region of the Middle East and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 46/30 of 6 December 1991 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region, and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to his report (A/45/435) or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-seventh session a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. On 15 February 2002, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to all Member States drawing attention to paragraph 10 resolution 56/21 and seeking the views of Member States on the matter. Replies were received from Egypt, Guatemala, Fiji, Israel, Lebanon, Qatar and Tunisia. The text of those replies is reproduced in section III below and any additional replies from Member States will be issued in an addendum to the present report.

II. Observations

3. The Secretary-General notes that the issue of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East remains of considerable importance. It is recalled that at the first session of the preparatory committee for the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, States parties reiterated their support for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction, and reaffirmed the importance of the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

4. The Secretary-General has continued to carry out various consultations with concerned parties within and outside the region in order to explore ways and means of promoting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Regrettably, no further progress has been achieved. Given the current situation in the region, it is essential that efforts continue with a view to creating the necessary conditions for a stable security environment in the region. The Secretary-General reaffirms the continued readiness of the United Nations to provide any assistance deemed helpful in that regard.

III. Replies received from Governments

Egypt

[Original: English]
[5 July 2002]

1. Egypt's commitment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is unquestionable. It was at the request of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt that the item "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East" was first inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1974. Since that date, the Assembly has annually adopted a resolution, by consensus since 1980, on this matter. Throughout the years, Egypt continued to play a consistently leading role in promoting the objective of ridding the Middle East of the threat of nuclear weapons.

2. As a State Party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and a signatory to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, Egypt has clearly and unambiguously demonstrated its rejection of the nuclear option, which represents a major threat to peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Today, Egypt notes that all States of the Middle East have become parties to the Treaty, with the exception of Israel, which regrettably persists in ignoring repeated calls to join the Treaty and to place all its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) full-scope safeguards, thereby perpetuating a dangerous imbalance in the region.

3. The importance given during the 2000 Review Conference to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is yet another testimony to the commitment of the international community to the establishment of such a zone in the region. The 2000 Review Conference — further to the 1995 resolution on the Middle East — adopted

unanimously in its final document a reaffirmation of the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards (see NPT/Conf.2000/28, para. 16/3), which reads as follows:

> "The Conference recalls that in paragraph 4 of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East the Conference 'calls upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope IAEA safeguards'. The Conference notes, in this connection, that the report of the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East (NPT/Conf.2000/7) states that several States have acceded to the Treaty and that, with these accessions, all States of the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are States Party to the NPT. The Conference welcomes the accession of these States and reaffirms the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of the Universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East."

4. Egypt is cognizant of the fact that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a difficult task. Indeed, each region of the world has its own characteristics, and each zone must be tailored to suit those characteristics. However, Egypt does not share the view that full-scale peace and fully developed political and economic relations between all States of the region are a prerequisite for the commencement of negotiations on the establishment of a zone. If such an argument was correct, it is unlikely that the Treaty of Tlatelolco or even the Treaty of Pelindaba would ever have been negotiated. Regrettably, conflicts continue to rage in various parts of Africa to this very day, yet such conflicts were not invoked as reasons to prevent negotiations on an African nuclear-weapon-free zone. To Egypt, experience has shown that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in areas of tension and conflict does indeed contribute to easing tensions, preventing conflicts and developing peaceful relations and mutual cooperation.

5. For a nuclear-weapon-free zone to come about in any area of the world, there must inevitably exist a regional commitment to this objective. Such a commitment is unquestionably present in the Middle East, as is testified to by the annual adoption of a consensus resolution of the General Assembly on the matter and by the adoption of consensus guidelines by the Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. In this connection, Egypt notes with satisfaction that there is agreement that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as well as the development of a zone free from weapons and all weapons of mass destruction should be encouraged. Egypt considers that it is imperative that those commitments be turned into concrete actions if it is to have a determining and positive impact on the Middle East peace process.

6. Making negotiations on a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone contingent upon an ever-growing list of prerequisites is a sure recipe for failure. In Egypt's view, the only prerequisite for negotiations to commence on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East is that States in the region have the political will to sit together and commence negotiations. Viewing the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone as no more than an act that "sets the seal on a durable peace" is not a vision that is shared by Egypt. A Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone is in and of itself an important confidence-building measure and an act of political reconciliation. Furthermore, maintaining that fully-fledged relations of peace must exist before talks on such a zone can commence, while at the same time persisting to maintain a nuclear option, are clearly two mutually exclusive and contradictory arguments. In a region as volatile as the Middle East, no solid and durable peace can be achieved while a nuclear threat continues to loom over the region.

7. Egypt will continue to pursue the objective of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East at the earliest time and will, in this context, continue to seek the support of regional and extraregional States. Furthermore, Egypt will continue its endeavours in realizing the objectives of establishing such a zone based on the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference. It will also pursue its April 1990 initiative for the establishment, in the Middle East, of a zone free from all weapons of mass

destruction. In its endeavours, it will continue to seek the support of the international community and of all those who are committed to ridding the world, both at the regional and global levels, of the threat of nuclear weapons.

Guatemala

[Original: Spanish]
[12 April 2002]

Guatemala considers General Assembly resolutions 56/24 B, 56/248 and 56/21 to be of global benefit and importance in the search for peace and security in a world free of the scourge of war, avoiding the danger of a nuclear war, in the hope that the nuclear-weapon States will agree to place their nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. To that end, the issue of a reasonable balance of forces will have to be addressed so that all States in the world can place acceptable limits on their offensive capacities.

Fiji

[Original: English]
[17 April 2002]

The Republic of Fiji Island endorses the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. The former also supports the request that a report on the implementation of the present resolution be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

Israel

[Original: English]
[30 May 2002]

1. Israel has always maintained that, in the Middle East, nuclear issues as well as all regional security issues, both conventional and non-conventional, should be dealt with in the full context of the peace process. It is in this framework that Israel supports the eventual establishment of the Middle East as a mutually verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone that would also be free of chemical and biological weapons as well as ballistic missiles.

2. General Assembly resolution 56/21, entitled "The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", does not adequately reflect Israel's position vis-à-vis the nuclear issue in the Middle East. In fact, Israel has substantive and significant reservations regarding certain elements of the resolution.

3. Notwithstanding those reservations, for over 20 years Israel has joined the consensus and has made extensive efforts to preserve the language and prevent unilateral changes. Israel has acted this way out of its belief that instead of highlighting different positions, there is a fundamental need for building confidence and creating a common vision for all the States in the Middle East.

4. The promotion of this vision must take into account the particular circumstances of the Middle East. Countries in the region continue to acquire and develop weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, deny Israel's right to exist and pursue aggressively hostile practices towards Israel. Moreover, in this region membership in global conventions does not necessarily provide adequate assurances in view of the record of non-compliance with international obligations by certain States, the case of Iraq being an obvious example. This environment of growing threats has a critical impact on the region's ability to move towards the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles.

5. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to intensify efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles to countries of concern in the Middle East. Those countries are not only engaged in extensive proliferation activities but are also involved in supporting terrorism. A range of international, regional and national efforts to promote a variety of measures, including more stringent controls on sensitive exports to those countries, are an urgent necessity.

6. This disturbing reality in the Middle East mandates a practical step-by-step approach, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of achieving a comprehensive peace between all the States in the region. This process, as has been demonstrated by the experience of other regions, such as Latin America, is inherently an incremental one. It can only realistically begin with modest arrangements for confidence-building measures in order to build the necessary trust for more ambitious cooperative security undertakings.

7. Effective arms control measures can only be achieved and sustained in a region in which wars, armed conflicts, terror, political hostility and incitement are not features of everyday life.

8. In recent years, Israel has sought to lay the enduring foundations of peace in our region, based on an historic reconciliation embodying the notions of compromise, mutual trust and respect, open borders and good neighbourliness. The basis for coexistence between Israel and its neighbours was laid in the bilateral peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, and we still hope to widen that process to encompass the Palestinians, Lebanon and Syria.

9. In addition, after the Madrid conference of 1991, Israel made a substantial effort to contribute to the success of the arms control and regional security talks in the framework of the multilateral negotiations of the peace process. The arms control and regional security talks were the appropriate forum to promote confidence and address regional security issues and challenges. Those talks were unfortunately discontinued by another State in the region instead of becoming an important channel for regional dialogue.

10. Notwithstanding this lack of progress at the regional level, Israel has attempted during the last decade to become more involved in the normative framework of international arms control efforts that do not impair our vital margins of security. Those efforts constitute an important component in the overall effort to improve the regional security climate. It was in that spirit that Israel signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, and ratified the Conventional Weapons Convention in 1995.

11. Israel adhered to the provisions of the Missile Technology Control Regime, respects the other supplier regimes, and participates in the United Nations register on conventional arms. Over the last year, Israel has constructively engaged in efforts in the United Nations and in other international forums to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles and their related technology. We also attach importance to United Nations deliberations on the illicit trafficking of small arms, and hope that the implementation of the programme of action will contribute to the global fight against terror.

12. As the international community has recognized, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among all the States of the region concerned. Such a zone can only be established through direct negotiations after States recognize each other and have established full peaceful and diplomatic relations. It cannot be established other than by the parties themselves, nor can it be established in a situation in which some of the States maintain an active state of war with Israel, refuse in principle to maintain peaceful relations with Israel or even recognize its right to exist.

13. We believe that one-sided and unbalanced resolutions, aimed at isolating and alienating Israel, such as the resolution on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, do not contribute to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Moreover, they undermine the confidence and the climate of cooperation that are essential for achieving that end, while ignoring the complex reality of the region.

14. Countries, particularly in the Middle East, should realize that such resolutions cannot be a substitute for the need to conduct direct negotiations, build confidence, reduce threats and establish stable peaceful relations in the region, all of which are essential milestones along the path to a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

15. Over the years, Israel has consistently pursued the policy described above. We regard that policy to be as valid today as it has been over the last decades. It provides sound guidance for regional security, based on the foundations of stability and peace.

Lebanon

[Original: English]
[11 April 2002]

Lebanon abides by all resolutions adopted by the United Nations aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[29 April 2002]

Qatar considers that in view of its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to international conventions in general, to

rid the region of the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, would be a major step and a great contribution to the establishment of peace, security and stability in the region. We affirm that such an initiative should be binding on all States without exception.

Tunisia

[Original: Arabic]
[24 June 2002]

1. In the resolution in question, the General Assembly invites the countries of the region to declare to the Security Council their support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and to consider the means that may contribute to complete disarmament and to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region of the Middle East. It requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in the study annexed to his report of 10 October 1990.

2. It should be said that Tunisia ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons by its Law No. 5 of 1970. The members of the League of Arab States are also in the course of elaborating a draft treaty to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, primarily nuclear weapons. All the countries of the Middle East except for Israel have ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the "Middle East" in this context meaning the members of the League of Arab States, in addition to Iran and Israel.

3. Accordingly, all the States concerned must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and agree to place all their nuclear facilities under the comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. In any event, doing so must not in any way present an obstacle to the acquisition of nuclear know-how and expertise for civilian purposes and the Treaty must be applied by all parties without discrimination.